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Carol Z.A. McGinnis

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## Using Anger Productively: "Amazon" Warrior Theory

Carol Z.A. McGinnis\*

Loyola College in Maryland

**ABSTRACT** - "Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that anger is a productive and positive emotion that is used in our innate instinct to fight for survival. This theory states that we implement an inner warrior, or "Amazon", in a way that is constructive to our needs to rectify perceived injustice. If this inner warrior is thwarted by cultural mores that subordinate anger to other, less effective emotions, we inadvertently promote pathological behavior. As a theory that seeks to define, predict, and explain human behavior related to the perception of injustice, "Amazon" Warrior Theory provides an understanding of anger that compliments and informs other theories that do not recognize an inherent inner warrior. The Face of Anger paradigm outlines how anger is processed via steps of event, energy, identification, choice, control, change and resolution.

Anyone can be angry—that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time; for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not easy. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Spencer, p. 427, 2003).\*

Many mental health issues currently plaguing American society such as Major Depressive Disorder (Goodwin, 2006, Frank et al, 2007), Alcohol and Drug Abuse (Aharonovich, Nguyen, & Nunes, 2001; Henriksen, 2007; Raphel, 2005), Suicide (Brunner, 2004; Miros, 2000), Teen Violence (Bratter, 2006; Ellison, & Nieponski, 2005; Martsch, M. D. (2005), Domestic Violence (Scott, 2002), Homicide (Jordan, 2005, Palermo, 2007), Sexual, Physical, and Emotional Abuse (Fisher, C., 2007; Smith Slep, & O'Leary, 2007; Aquino, Douglas, & Martinko, 2004; Van Velsor & Cox, 2001), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Taft, Street, Marshall, Dowdall, & Riggs, 2007; Reyes & Hicklin, 2005; Everly, 2002), Obesity and Eating Disorders (Fassino, Leombruni, Pierò, Abbate-Daga, & Giacomo, 2003), Chronic Pain (Brody, 2007; Okifuji, Turk, & Curran, 1999) and other diagnoses are associated with anger. Because our society recognizes anger as a negative state of being, most research often correlates this emotion with hostility, aggression, and violence. "Amazon" Warrior Theory

\*Carol Z.A. McGinnis; Loyola College Graduate Center - Timonium Campus; 2034 Greenspring Drive; Timonium, Maryland 21093; csalisbury@loyola.edu (email).

seeks to reclassify anger as an appropriate emotional response to injustice that is distinct from these secondary behaviors and can escalate or deescalate to other emotional states such as irritation, frustration, fury or rage (Mikula, Scherer, & Athenstaedt, 1998).

"Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that our culture subordinates the expression of anger to other, more polite means of communication that produces harmful effects for individuals and American society as a whole. Anger makes us uncomfortable and unclear about how to respond and we relegate its expression to extremely limited venues such as sporting events and political forums. Hollywood acknowledges this cultural understanding of anger through its regular manufacturing of vigilante films that satisfy our need for the expression of anger. It is possible that we are inadvertently encouraging inappropriate venues for the expression of anger by our lack of non-aggressive modeling or positive instruction on how to express anger appropriately. Interested in the storage and utilization of anger, "Amazon" Warrior Theory postulates that, with practice and training, the energy from anger can be stored by the individual for use at any time.

### ***The Inner Warrior***

"Amazon" Warrior Theory seeks to acknowledge the inner warrior and survivor in every person. Intended to serve both men and women as unique individuals who differ in the way this inner warrior is defined, the term "Amazon" has been chosen to ensure inclusiveness for all people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or other discriminators of diversity. Historically, Amazon mythology encompasses many different cultural interpretations ranging from the early Greek stories, to the Middle Ages, revolutionary France, and the Amazons of Dahomey and provides a strong ideal of women that is not constricted by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status (Edgerton, 2000; Alpern, 1998; Kleinbaum, 1983; Tyrrell, 1984). Therapists may choose to introduce this theory without using the word "Amazon" for male clients, and, although some women may identify with a warrior sense of self, individuals may have difficulty with the masculine intonation of the word "warrior" and prefer to think of themselves with the more feminine, "Amazon" descriptor. Gender differences are expected to manifest in almost all of the anger processing steps of the Face of Anger paradigm because of cultural influences and differences in modeling of appropriate angering for men and women of different cohort groups. Research in these areas will need to be explored to determine what these gender differences may be to support or to refute various applications of this theory.

"Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that, much like warrior training in other contexts, this inner warrior can become practiced in the art of processing anger to the point where energy from any given perceived injustice can be stored, recalled, and utilized for other goals that are indirectly related to the initial unjust



event. For example, a woman who is unfairly passed over for a promotion at work due to her gender might recognize the futility of challenging the oppressive administration and store that energy for use in her studies as a part time college student. When this woman does not feel motivated to go to class, write a paper, or conduct reading that is required for the coursework that will get her into a more lucrative occupation, she might tap into the energy of that initial injustice by recalling how that lost promotion felt. So too, can another individual recall the injustice of a spouse's painful childhood as motivation to lobby on a daily basis for child rights. "Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that healthy people often find ways to channel anger energy without fully acknowledging how that process has been achieved.

Through the recognition and establishment of the inner warrior that promotes successful survival, "Amazon" Warrior Theory seeks to honor those who have demonstrated what it means to be a survivor in a way that will help the mentally ill to fight for their own positive goals. Our culture is steeped in examples of heroism and survival due to the ravages of war, traumatic events such as hurricane Katrina, and other tragic happenings that include rape, homicide, and physical assault. Victor Frankl's (1984) work in the midst of the Nazi occupation and ensuing Holocaust, Feminist Theory and its focus on social justice, and survivor research emphasize the need for awareness of environmental injustice. Literature on PTSD, for example, helps us to understand how the perception of the individual and his or her violated world view is critical for assisting these individuals out of pathology and back to optimal mental health (Everly, 2002). As a multidimensional theory that compliments other theoretical approaches, "Amazon" Warrior Theory is critical to understanding human behavior at its best and worst.

### *Anger in Survival*

Our ability to survive in the womb often depends on the environmental conditions that are directly affected by nature, genetics, maternal health and other influences, but our post-birth survival relies on our ability to fight for what we need. Evolution Theory posits that the experience of hunger, extreme heat or cold, fear of falling, and other threats to existence carries natural responses that will get the infant what s/he needs to exist (Darwin, 1965; Plutchik, 1980; Soltis, 2004). Social Cognitive Theory suggests that infants and children learn how to influence and change the environment around them through individual, proxy, and collective agency (Bandura, 2006). "Amazon" Warrior Theory acknowledges these perspectives yet posits that there is also an instinctual psychological response to these and other existential threats as perceived injustices. Although Evolution Theory hypothesizes that infants may cry for the manipulation of additional resources from the caregiver (Soltis, 2004) and Social Cognitive Theory posits that the infant cries to facilitate probable outcomes (Bandura, 2006), "Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that crying is driven by an

inner warrior that instinctually fights against the injustice of pain in a way that facilitates optimal survival outcomes.

"Amazon" Warrior Theory suggests that this psychological aversion for injustice develops along with the child's individual rate of maturity and motivates the child to learn how to fight in a more sophisticated manner for optimal survival within the family unit, in social situations, and even with inanimate objects or toys. Tantrums, throwing, biting, pinching, slapping, running, and grabbing are often seen in toddlers that are frustrated by the environment and angered by the perceived injustice of not getting what they want. Good parenting redirects this energy into more pleasant means that are socially accepted (Bandura, 2006). Using please, thank you, flirtation, subordinate posturing, or even silence might be the best way to fight for equal time within the family unit or to receive the coveted parental pat on the head. Bad parenting ignores the anger or punishes the child for the unwanted behavior without redirection or positive modeling (Bandura, & Walters, 1959).

"Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that children who are less successful in channeling their anger find themselves in an endless negative cycle of self-destructive behaviors. This negative cycle creates an increase in perceived injustice that in turn creates more energy that requires positive direction. Frustrated by the lack of a resolution the child acts out in a dramatic way that is inappropriate and results in more discipline for the negative behavior. In the effort to obtain validation of his or her highly charged emotional state and to receive acknowledgement of the injustice that is being experienced, the child is angering in a way that is counter-productive. This anger gets channeled into activity that strives for a better outcome than what is currently experienced and often results in aggression, hostility, and violent behavior. Sometimes the negative shouting response from a neglectful parent is the best outcome that a child can hope to achieve through the repeated soiling of her training pants. So too, does the adult berate the clerk for a mislabeled item at the grocery store until the situation is resolved. Both the child and the disgruntled adult are using their anger to resolve injustice the best possible way, albeit misdirected and less than optimal given the nature of the specific problem.

### ***Anger as a Positive Emotion***

It may seem inappropriate to examine anger as a positive emotion unless we consider salient historical examples of anger being used in a productive and non-violent way. Popular sports such as football and hockey use anger to coach the players to gear up for games and to keep the defensive line motivated (Drape, 2000; McCarthy, 2007). Military training uses anger to generate motivation and team cohesiveness that is critical for corps survival under the stressful conditions of battle (Atkinson, 1999; Rayman, 2006). Two of our greatest leaders in the past century, Martin Luther King and Mahatma Ghandi, responded to the injustices



of their time by using anger to promote peace protests that changed the political landscape of their nation and the world at large.

Anger has also been understood spiritually as an appropriate response to injustice. For Christians, Jesus Christ used anger to make his point about the sanctity of the Temple (Mark 11:15), the evil nature of death (John 11:33), and the injustice of existence without bearing fruit (Matthew 21:18-19). The Judeo-Christian concept of God recounts His wrath on many occasions that include the Great Flood (Genesis 7), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:23-29) and other Old Testament stories. The Nation of Islam and the Muslim teachings of Mohammad have cultural underpinnings that accept anger as a way of life (Shakir, 2000). Although terrorism is the inappropriate expression of anger through violent acts upon innocent people, many Muslims use their anger in a positive manner to evoke change in more peaceful, activist ways (Godlas, 2002). Evolutionary change as a reflection of God is presented theologically by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who wrote in *The Divine Milieu* that "human action has no value other than the intention that directs it" (Teilhard, 1960, p. 53). "Amazon" Warrior Theory recognizes intention and spirituality in anger processing to resolve pain, guilt, and other harmful emotional states that can subvert optimal mental health.

Other theorists provide potentially positive views of anger that need to be recognized as instrumental for the development of "Amazon" Warrior Theory. William Glasser's Choice Theory (1998), for example, presents psychological distress as the result of individual choice and emphasizes the cognitive functioning of choice in everything that we do. This cognitive-behavioral perspective allows for anger as a positive emotion because it recognizes that angering is a choice that can be selected as an appropriate emotional response. Also of theoretical importance is Albert Ellis' (1997) perspective of anger in Rational Emotive Behavioral Theory (REBT). In his book, *How to Control Your Anger Before It Controls You*, Ellis adds the reassurances to "accept yourself with your anger" (p.145), that "you can learn to live fairly happily with your anger" (p. 151), and "you don't have to make yourself unangry almost every time your anger rises" (p. 151). "Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that this acceptance of anger as a viable choice is important for learning how to use it productively.

Kübler-Ross' (1969) understanding of Anger as an important stage in dying and in the process of loss indicates that this is an innate response for all human beings when presented with the injustice of death and loss. She stated that it is important for caregivers and medical workers to understand that individuals who are suffering from terminal illness have the right to be angry due to the injustice that death represents. It is important to note that anger is productive for Kübler-Ross only when it is understood as justified and viewed as a necessary stage by the helpers assisting the person going through this final experience of loss. Kübler-Ross writes that, "when the environment was able to tolerate this anger

without taking it personally, the patient was greatly helped" (Kübler-Ross, 1969, p. 263). Thus, outbursts and negativity that a patient and family may direct toward caregivers is not a personal attack but a way for these people to process the anger that is a natural and normal response. While it is true that not everyone reaches the stage of acceptance and stages are not necessarily met in succession or one at a time, Kübler-Ross wrote extensively about the importance of listening and validating the client when s/he is working through the Anger stage. Kübler-Ross was careful in advising caregivers about the potential for defensiveness due to cultural bias concerning anger and emphasized that anger can be an important part of a client's movement toward the final stage of Acceptance.

### ***Anger Research***

These examples correlate with research that conceptualizes anger as an emotion that infers responsibility to others and often lead to direct or indirect action against the anger-provoking person or source (Averil, 1983; Frijda, 1986; Weiner, 1995). In another study on the pre-frontal approach and withdrawal aspects of anger, Harmon-Jones & Sigelman (2001) found that "anger generates approach-related action tendencies that are generally aimed at resolving the anger-producing event (p. 799)." This and other research indicates that people who are angry use cognitive functioning to determine responsibility for what has occurred and they have energy that motivates them to act (Brehm, 1999). It is probable that it is not the emotional state of anger that is negative but rather our interpretation of that emotion and our choice for expressing that energy that can cause negative outcomes.

Some researchers believe that the perception of anger as a negative emotion is influenced by the fact that negative situations elicit the anger response (Lazarus, 1991; Bies, Tripp, & Kramer, 1997). Our cultural environment can have a negative impact on how we perceive anger and influence our choices for expressing that emotion. If the situations that cause anger are bad and it is bad to express that emotion regardless of the context, then it is not a far stretch for us to think of ourselves as bad when we allow ourselves to get angry. We may not have a cultural perspective that will facilitate learning about appropriate application and expression of anger and consider it as a negative choice altogether. Harmon-Jones (2000) recently demonstrated that, on the whole, the attitude toward anger is unfavorable and that "anger would be classified as a negative emotion if individuals harbor a negative attitude toward the feeling of anger (p.798)." If children are taught that anger is bad and are discouraged from expressing anger they are being taught that anger needs to be suppressed and denied as a negative emotion.

When individuals learn how to express anger in an effective way, they tend to have a more positive view of that emotion (Harmon-Jones, 2000). If our worldview does not favor anger as a viable alternative, we are not able to practice its expression in practical or effective ways. As an emotion that



automatically comes with disposable energy, individuals often worry that they will experience a loss of control or act in ways that are abominable if they demonstrate anger in any way. Inexperience and fear can further prohibit a person's willingness to potentially lose control by being angry and promote suppression of that emotional response. "Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that the inability to express anger appropriately can negatively impact our psychological well being and provides practicing of appropriate angering to reduce fears.

The energizing aspect of anger is a unique byproduct of that emotion. This information could be invaluable for counselors who work with apathetic or unmotivated clients. Some studies on contingency learning have found that a positive correlation exists between anger and specific aspects of learning (Harmon-Jones & Sigelman, 2001). Researchers discovered that infants who displayed anger during extinction also demonstrated the highest levels of a required arm pull operant when the learning portion of the task was reinstated (Lewis, Alessandri, & Sullivan, 1990; Lewis, Sullivan, Ramsey, & Alessandri, 1992). This information indicates that anger energy might be used to produce positive results in learning. Harmon-Jones & Sigelman state that anger may be correlated with positive performance outcomes in other ways. For example, research has demonstrated that individuals who responded with anger to failure at one set of problems subsequently showed increased performance on a second, unrelated set of problems (Mikulincer, 1988). If anger influences performance in a positive way, it would be helpful to assist clients in processing anger productively and to harness that energy for use in therapy. Motivation can be a challenge for many clients and counselors can help the client to use anger as an effective way to promote change within therapy and for life goals in general.

The correlation between anger as a motivational emotion and the potential for change is curiously reminiscent of the Yerkes-Dodson relationship between anxiety and performance. If an increase in anxiety is related to an increase in performance it is possible that a similar relationship exists between anger and performance. "Amazon" Warrior Theory recognizes the correlation between anger and anxiety yet seeks to promote an understanding of anger that is unique from anxiety and other physiological states by presenting anger energy as a resource that can be stored and used at will by the individual. Research conducted in other theoretical areas support this need for clarification of anger. For example, behavioral research by Goldstein, Serber, and Piaget (1970) sought to reduce fear by triggering anger in the participants. These researchers introduced artificially induced anger as a counter-conditioning agent and were successful in reducing the level of fear for these clients. Goldstein, Serber, and Piaget (1970) also succeeded in teaching the participants how to keep that anger available for later use.

"Amazon" Warrior Theory proposes that anger can be used in other therapeutically productive ways. In research conducted on anger as a vehicle for



survivors of sexual abuse, therapists discovered that women were able to reframe their anger to place the appropriate responsibility on their abusers and to develop a feeling of self-efficacy in the recovery process (Van Velsor & Cox, 2001). These researchers state that a cognitive-emotional shift appeared to foster empowerment on an individual level. Their work posited that more clinicians should begin to examine anger as central to the treatment process and to consider its expression directed at the therapist as a marker of growth and change (Van Velsor & Cox, 2001). "Amazon" Warrior Theory can be used in therapeutic planning of interventions for reframing anger in these cases.

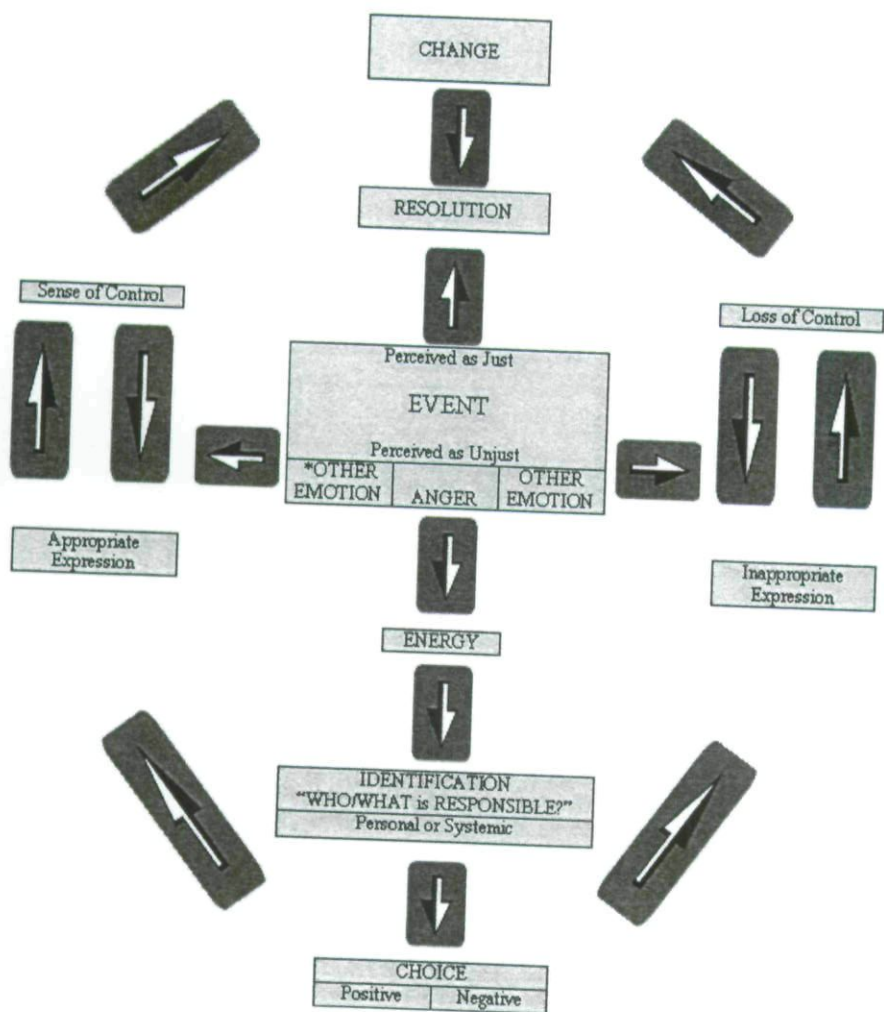
Other research suggests that there are positive aspects of anger that need further exploration. Because state anger has been found to relate to high levels of self-assurance, physical strength, and bravery (Izard, 1991) and trait anger has been correlated with high levels of assertiveness and competitiveness (Buss & Perry, 1992), "Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that these positive outcomes might be realized more frequently for some clients if anger can be expressed safely within the therapeutic environment. Harmon-Jones and Sigelman (2001) also point out that research on infant studies on anger and arm pull operant reveal important correlations between anger and joy. Infants who displayed anger during extinction expressed the most joy and interest when learning was reinstated (Lewis et al., 1990; Lewis et al., 1992). This research suggests that there may be a correlation between anger, joy and learning in a way that need further exploration. As a positive emotion, anger needs to be considered as a part of the therapeutic process for obtaining better mental health goals and "Amazon" Warrior Theory provides the theoretical framework for research that would evaluate how anger processing can lead to achieving optimal mental health goals.

### *Face of Anger Paradigm*

#### *Introduction*

The best way to understand anger is to perceive angering as one of many choices within a process model that prioritizes anger as the most viable emotion when injustice is experienced. Although similar to the emotional processing in experiential therapy (Pascual-Leone & Greenberg, 2007), the Face of Anger paradigm (see Figure 1) presents the unique dynamic of anger as a response that facilitates energy, identification, choice, control, change, and resolution (see Figure 2). The Face of Anger paradigm provides us with a breakdown of how these choices manifest appropriate responses and a sense of control versus inappropriate responses and the loss of control. For the purpose of this paradigm, appropriate responses are defined as behaviors that prioritize safety whereas inappropriate responses are potentially harmful. "Amazon" Warrior Theory presents this paradigm as an anger processing guideline for people who want to learn about anger and assist others who are struggling with anger due to perceived injustice.

**Figure 1**  
**"Face of Anger" Paradigm**



\* Spiritually directed emotion i.e. Love



**Figure 2**  
**"Face of Anger" 10-Step Breakdown**

1. **EVENT** - An event occurs that is perceived as just or unjust within the client's worldview.
2. **JUST** - If the event is perceived as just, s/he is able to move directly to a stage of resolution.
3. **UNJUST** - If the person perceives that an injustice has occurred, s/he will choose an emotion as a response.
4. **OTHER EMOTION** - If the emotion of choice is something other than anger, i.e. being sad, glad, lonely or afraid (\*the exception being a spiritually-biased state), the person will move into inappropriate expression that operates within a self-perpetuating "loss of control" environment.
5. **ANGER** - If the emotion of choice is anger, the person will gain the benefit of energy
6. **ENERGY** - This energy is channeled into making sense of what has happened via identification of the responsible entity.
7. **IDENTIFICATION** - Once the person has made the identification of whom or what is responsible, they are able to move into a positive or negative choice to express anger.
8. **POSITIVE CHOICE** - A positive choice will move the person into appropriate expression that provides the client with a sense of control.
9. **NEGATIVE CHOICE** - A negative choice can move the person into inappropriate expression in a "loss of control" environment that can become self-perpetuating and self-defeating over time (depression, drug or alcohol abuse, violence, aggression, suicide).
10. **CHANGE & RESOLUTION** - Although both options bring about change, and ultimately resolution, the positive route of choice provides the person with appropriate options for expressing their anger in a productive, and healthy, manner.

**Event**

The starting point for this paradigm is in the green "Event" box located at the center of the upper portion where the bridge of the nose might be if the figure were seen as a face. If the event is perceived as just and expected, the person moves directly into the resolution stage because there is no conflict with what has happened. When a person is exposed to a perceived injustice, to themselves or to someone else, they are given the option to choose an emotional response. Although this choice may seem instantaneous and instinctual in many circumstances, "Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that cognition precedes action

in a way that can be relearned and directed. Similar to irrational thinking (Ellis, 1997) and quality world selection (Glasser, 1998), this choice to anger can be identified and modified according to the client's individual life perspective, or world view. "Amazon" Warrior Theory presents that most people choose anger because they identify injustice with unfairness that compromises survival in a meaningful way (Frankl, 1984). Although anger tends to be the emotion of choice for injustice, some people choose another emotion such as fear or sadness and move into a negative cycle of inappropriate expression and loss of control. An example of how a person might choose an emotion other than anger might assist in understanding this first step in the Face of Anger paradigm. For example, Mary is robbed of her purse by a young teenager in the parking lot of a local grocery store and left bruised and beaten in a matter of minutes. Although she had asked the security guard of the store to walk her out because it was dark that night, he had refused and she had been left to her own defenses when the robbery happened. Within two weeks, Mary was able to replace the credit cards, purse, and other valuables that were taken but could not bring herself to go back to work and soon lost her job. Rather than angering with the security guard and the injustice of the whole event, Mary chose to become fearful and afraid of leaving her house. She kept the negative cycle going through rumination, panic attacks, and statements like "I can't go out" and "I've lost everything." Mary has chosen to be fearful and afraid because she is unaware of how productive angering appropriately might be. The only modeling Mary has had for anger is the constant fighting and throwing of things that her mother conducted when Mary was a child, and the crying that her father resorted to when he allowed himself to be angry. Neither of these behaviors would have helped Mary to make sense of the robbery and were not considered as viable responses. If Mary had chosen to anger with this modeling as her only way to express anger, it is likely that she would hurt herself or others through that negative expression and not find adequate resolution for the injustice.

Jack, on the other hand, was robbed in a similar circumstance while doing his laundry in the basement of his apartment complex. Jack chose to anger after the event, feeling vulnerable because of the shabby locking system on the front entrance of the building. Using the paradigm, we can see that Jack received energy in choosing to anger that helped him to identify the locking system on the front door as the responsible component in the happening of the robbery. Choosing to respond negatively would have Jack beating the front entrance with a baseball bat, refusing to do laundry for weeks at a time, or in self-medicating his anxiety with alcohol or drugs. Any of these inappropriate responses would undoubtedly result in negative outcomes for Jack ranging from charges for the destruction of property, interpersonal ramifications of wearing soiled clothing every day, and potential medical issues related to alcohol or drug abuse. Instead, "Amazon" Warrior Theory would point out Jack's positive choice to express his anger in an appropriate manner by writing to the apartment complex



management requesting an immediate correction of the substandard locking system. Jack felt that he had taken the situation into his own control by sending the letter and, when the apartment complex wrote back asking for his opinion on which locking system would be best, he felt vindicated for raising this important safety hazard to their attention. The locking system on the building entrance was changed and Jack felt that the injustice of his robbery had been rectified in the best way possible.

### ***Energy***

The second step for angering in the Face of Anger paradigm is recognition of the energy that accompanies this emotional response. As an approach motivated emotion (Harmon-Jones & Allen, 1998), anger provides energy that is immediate and readily available. When the individual recognizes the energy as an available resource that can be directed, anger becomes a welcome and enjoyable response rather than a fearful and out of control state of being. Oftentimes, clients report feeling euphoric when angering which is consistent with anger research during manic phases of bipolar disorder (Depue & Iacono, 1989; Fowles, 1993). Acknowledgement of the energy that accompanies anger is important for maintaining a sense of control that is critical for validating the inner warrior's need to fight for survival. This acknowledgement also reduces anxiety or fear about the potentially overwhelming sensation that this energy creates and reminds the client of the next step in the angering process.

### ***Identification***

Once the energy is experienced, the client is then prompted to make sense of the injustice by identifying who or what is responsible for the event. In the direst of circumstances, human beings strive for meaning as a way to understand injustice (Frankl, 1984) and "Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that this step is a critical part of how each person's unique world view and life perspective influences and informs perceived injustice. In this step, the client reevaluates the initial choice to anger as the appropriate response and identifies where the threat is coming from and to whom or what the response should be directed. This identification can be either personal or systemic and/or both depending on the individual perspective, ranging from a general concept of evil in the world that is responsible for all things to one individual offense that was deliberate or irresponsible. This step might encompass the spirituality of the individual and a negative view of God or society that pervades all inputs that this person might receive, or a more finely tuned understanding of the world that abhors incompetence that stems from laziness or sloth. It is in this step where the therapist might challenge the client's cognitions and assist in reframing his or her world view for a better fit to actual life happenings. It is important to note here that there is no relationship or correlation between a personal or systemic

identification of the injustice and a positive or negative choice in the next step.

### ***Choice***

The next step is where the client makes the choice to express the anger in a positive or negative way. A positive choice is one that seeks change and resolution of the injustice in the safest possible way. A negative choice often results in an aggressive, hostile, or violent expression of anger that is likely to be harmful and result in a negative cycle that may or may not result in resolution of the injustice. It is at this step where therapy endeavors to facilitate a creative discussion for expressive alternatives that will utilize the available anger energy to bring about appropriate resolution. Therapeutic practice of these choices for the client is an important part of reinforcing appropriate angering. This practice can be conducted by charting the various stages of anger for that client, identifying potential choices for different trigger events for that client, and role-play of angering in a safe therapeutic environment. When the choice has been evaluated and then adopted, the client moves into a potential control-expression cycle that self-reinforces the behavior until change occurs.

### ***Control***

Control versus loss of control often results according to the appropriate versus inappropriate expression of that choice. For example, a slap in the face of an offending person may be the most appropriate and positive response given a particular culture and circumstance. A woman may learn that the slapping of a man's face when affronted is the safest and most appropriate response to communicate the need for change and resolution in a specific cultural context. This same response in a different situation might be inappropriate and dangerous and result in escalated violence that comes with loss of control and continuing retaliatory actions. One slap may lead to another slap that finally ends with someone in the hospital. Although this second scenario also ends in change and potentially resolution, the outcome would not fit with a world view of optimal survival.

### ***Change***

The step of change is achieved either through an exhaustion of the anger energy or a change in the situation that is acknowledged by the client. Hence a change in the client or the environment can indicate effective change. Once the change has occurred, the client evaluates what this means according to his or her world view and how this change fits with the identification of whom or what was deemed responsible for the injustice and the choice to anger in that particular positive or negative way. Examples for positive change might be: a promotion at work for doing extra work on a project, a mother saying "I love you" at the end of a phone call, or an estranged spouse agreeing to a divorce request. Whereas negative change examples may include: someone calling the police, the



sound of crying, or death of the client. Therapeutic intervention at this step in "Amazon" Warrior Theory focuses on the meaning of the change and how this may or may not bring the client into the final resolution step.

### **Resolution**

Finally, the process of anger ends at the resolution step when the client confirms that the response to the event has ended. This step is important because it provides closure for the client and allows for the opportunity to move away permanently from the unjust event. Attainment of the resolution step "resets" the inner warrior of the client from a military "attention" state of anxiety to that of an "at ease" or relaxed posture. Without this step, the client remains in a constant state of "attention" and is unable to move forward. "Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that many clients suffer due to an inability to move into the resolution step after a traumatic event and need psychological assistance to internally resolve what may have happened a long time ago. Personal or systemically identified parties may seem unattainable due to death, distance, or other reasons and the client may feel stuck at the change step of the angering process. Because this is the step where the client makes sense of what happened in light of his or her response, therapy for a client who cannot move into resolution may involve permission to revisit the injustice and to move through the process of anger once again.

### **Psychospiritual implications**

An exception to this anger process is the rare opportunity for an enlightened individual to move from an unjust event to an appropriate response via strong religious convictions or spiritual development that expects injustice as a part of a larger world view (Augsburger, 1993). As modeled by extraordinary individuals such as the Dalai Lama or Mother Theresa, the emotional response of love to all injustice can circumvent the angering process in a healthy way. It is important to note this exception due to the increase in popularity for psychospiritual research and the impact that spirituality has on psychological diagnosis and treatment. Unfortunately, many human beings do not have the time or commitment for a spiritual life that this response would require. Some individuals may experience feelings of guilt or failure due to an inability to respond to injustice in this manner and resist "Amazon" Warrior Theory as potentially compromising of that endeavor. It would be important for the therapist to incorporate this world view in the Face of Anger paradigm to assist the client in practicing appropriate responses for anger in light of this religious and/or spiritual conviction.

### **Conclusion**

"Amazon" Warrior Theory is invaluable for assisting people in obtaining positive mental health outcomes through the effective utilization of anger energy.

Until now, anger has been an emotion to manage or redirect in a way that is counter-intuitive and potentially destructive. Although anger research has been increasing, and anger scales are being created (Martin & Dahlen, 2007), the psychological community has much to gain from a new perspective on this underestimated emotional response. Current interests that emphasize a shift for social justice and a national initiative toward psychological preparedness (Everly, 2002; National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004) requires that we take a closer look at the particular processing of anger and how that emotional response can be utilized through appropriate versus inappropriate behaviors. "Amazon" Warrior Theory posits that, as human beings we are born with the ability to anger as an important survival mechanism that is indispensable for its accompanying energy and desire to act.

Our ability to use this energy can be vital for reducing anxiety and fears related to other variables that compromise our existence. Seen as a positive emotion, anger needs to be separated from acts of aggression, hostility, and violent behaviors that are poor choices for expressing that emotion. Through our cultural suppression of anger as an unacceptable emotion, we undermine our ability to address injustice effectively in our lives. Without an effective understanding and acceptance of anger as a productive emotion, we threaten not only our own mental health but the status of the nation as a healthy community. Professionals who work in the field of counseling need to be aware of the negative implications for subordinating anger to other, less optimal emotions for handling injustice. "Amazon" Warrior Theory proposes to change the way anger is viewed. Through a theoretical framework that can be used to conceptualize, introduce, and implement effective therapeutic interventions, this theory recognizes the inner warrior existing in each one of us that struggles to survive in an optimal way.

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